



A Citizen's Guide to Project Review and the Permit Process



Development projects in Amherst commonly require review and approval by various Boards, Committees and Town officials prior to being started. This document is intended to provide a brief overview of, and links to, the various permit applications, rules & regulations, and fees administered by the Office of Conservation and Development. The office is located on the second floor of Town Hall and includes the Planning Department (including Zoning), Conservation Department and Inspection Services (Building Department).

Meeting with staff in the office of Conservation and Development is important before beginning any project. The number and type of permits required for a project will depend on its level of complexity and/or location and could range from a building permit to requiring approvals from multiple Town Departments and permitting and advisory Boards prior to obtaining a building permit.

For ALL projects

- A Building Permit will most likely be required. Consult with Inspections Services before commencing work.
- Any project within a wetland buffer zone or within a wetland resource area, requires review and approval from the Conservation Commission. Consult with the Wetland Administrator before commencing work.
- If in a Historic District or affecting a historic building, review and approval from the Historical Commission may be required.
- The demolition of structures (i.e. houses, barns, detached garages) requires approval from the Building Commissioner and/or the Historical Commission.
- If affecting trees along any public road, public way, or Scenic Road, review and approval by the Tree Warden, Conservation Commission and Planning Board may be required.

Additional Review/Permits/Approval

- [Select Board](#) – Liquor licenses, victualler (food) licenses, taxi licenses
- [Fire Department](#) – Sprinklers/alarms, smoke detectors, dumpster
- [Board of Health](#) – Food service, septic systems
- [Public Works](#) – Utility hook-ups, curb cuts
- [Tree Warden](#) – Public shade trees

Pre-Application Steps (see last page)

1. *GIS/ Property Checklist*—Complete this checklist prior to contacting Town staff.
2. *Consultation with Town staff*—Each project is reviewed on a case-by-case basis and can have its own unique permit requirements.

Common Project Examples & Potential Review/Permits

- Addition (single family)
 - Inspection Services
 - Fire Department
 - Board of Health (if adding bedrooms)
 - Conservation Commission
- Interior Renovation (single family)
 - Inspection Services
 - Fire Department
 - Board of Health (if adding bedrooms)
- Sign
 - Inspection Services
 - Design Review Board (if near downtown)
 - Planning Department (depending on size/location)
- Swimming Pool
 - Inspection Services
 - Conservation Commission
- Fence/Shed
 - Inspection Services
 - Conservation Commission
- Retail
 - Planning Department
 - Inspection Services
 - Fire Department (if changing interior)
- Restaurant
 - Planning Department
 - Inspection Services
 - Fire Department
 - Board of Health
 - Select Board
- Multifamily
 - Planning Department
 - Inspection Services
 - Fire Department
 - Board of Health
- Office
 - Planning Department
 - Inspection Services
- Change in Use
 - Planning Department
 - Inspection Services



A Citizen's Guide to Project Review and the Permit Process



PLANNING DEPARTMENT

The Planning Department is responsible for the administration of permitting for all land uses identified in [Section 3.3](#) of the [Amherst Zoning Bylaw](#) and all subdivision regulations, as enabled under state law. The Planning Department provides review and staff support for all permit applications to the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Design Review Board and Historical Commission.

Permit Applications

Planning Board

- [Site Plan Review](#)
- [Special Permit \(SPP\)](#)
- [Subdivision Approval Not Required \(ANR\)](#)
- [Preliminary Subdivision](#)
- [Definitive Subdivision](#)
- [Cluster Subdivision](#)

Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA)

- [Special Permit, Variance or Appeal](#)
- [Comprehensive Permit \(40B\)](#)

Design Review Board (DRB)

- [Design Review](#)

Historical Commission

- [Demolition Delay Review](#)

Rules and Regulations

- [Planning Board Rules and Regulations](#)
- [Zoning Board Rules and Regulations](#)
- [Design Review Board Rules and Regulations](#)
- [Subdivision Regulations](#)
- [Demolition Delay Regulations](#)

Guidance

- [Design Review Board Handbook](#)
- [Streetscape Guidelines](#)
- [Town of Amherst Landscaping Guidelines](#)

Fees

- [Planning Department Fees](#)

CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT

The Conservation Department is responsible for the administration of environmental laws and policies, open space protection and management, preservation of natural features of the environment, and coordination for joint action with many town bodies. The Conservation Department provides review and staff support for all permit applications to the Conservation Commission (wetlands), Agricultural Commission, and Public Shade Tree Committee.

Permit Applications

Conservation Commission

- [Wetland Protection Act Form 1 - Request for Determination of Applicability - Instructions and Application](#)
- [Wetland Protection Act Form 3 - Notice of Intent \(NOI\) - Application](#)
- [Wetland Protection Act Form 3 - Instructions](#)

Rules and Regulations

- [Wetland Bylaw](#)
- [Wetland Regulations](#)

Guidance

- [Request For Determination Checklist](#)
- [Notice Of Intent Checklist](#)

Fees

- Please contact the Conservation Department (413) 259-3045 or conservation@amherstma.gov



A Citizen's Guide to Project Review and the Permit Process



INSPECTION SERVICES DEPARTMENT

The Inspection Services Department is responsible for administering the Massachusetts General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Regulations (Building Code), and selected Town of Amherst bylaws relating to land use and the construction and occupancy of buildings and structures. The Inspection Services Department includes the Building Commissioner and provides review and staff support for all building permits, electrical permits, gas permits and plumbing permits.

Permit Applications

Building Permit

- [One- or Two-Family Dwelling](#)
- [Other Than a One- or Two-Family Dwelling](#)
- [Construct, Repair, or Renovate a Shed, Sign, or Fence, or to Install a Tent](#)
- [Demolition Permit](#)
- Woodstove/Pellet stove
- New Smoke Detector/Carbon Monoxide
- New Sprinkler Only
- Pool Permit

Electrical

- [Electrical Permit](#)
- [Request for Meter Reconnection](#)

Gas

- [Gas Permit](#)

Plumbing

- [Plumbing Permit](#)

Other

- [Certificate of Inspection](#)
- [Insulation for Sunrooms](#)
- [Insulation Alternatives for Additions](#)
- [Application for Grandfathered Specialty Construction Supervisor License](#)

Rules and Regulations

- [Ceiling Height Requirements](#)
- [Fence Setback Requirements](#)
- [Private Swimming Pool Requirements](#)
- [Railing, Steps, and Landing Requirements](#)
- [Roofing Requirements](#)
- [Shed Setback Requirements](#)
- [Single-Family Dwellings and Additions Inspections Required](#)
- [Swimming Pools - Inspections Required](#)
- [Tent Permit Information & Requirements](#)

Guidance

- [Information Required for Manufactured Buildings](#)
- [FAQ: New Construction Supervisor License \(CSL\) Categories and Related Home Improvement Contractor \(HIC\) Registration Issues](#)
- [Woodstove Installation Checklist](#)
- [Deck Permit- Information Needed to Apply](#)
- [Detached Accessory Structure Permit / Information Needed to Apply](#)

Construction Control Projects

- [Construction Control Affidavit \(initial\)](#)
- [Construction Control Affidavit \(Final\)](#)
- [Chapter 9 Narrative – life safety](#)
- [Chapter 34 Narrative – changes to existing building](#)
- [Plan Review Checklist for Construction Control Projects](#)
- [AAB Narrative](#)
- [Final Completion Requirements](#)
- [Chapter 17 – structural review](#)
- [Energy Code Requirements](#)

Fees

- [Building Permit Fee Schedule](#)
- [Electrical Permit Fee Schedule](#)
- [Plumbing Permit Fee Schedule](#)
- [Gas Permit Fee Schedule](#)



Pre-Application Checklist

Town GIS Property Checklist

A wide range of property information (such as address, lot area, Zoning District, property maps, aerial photographs and other important information) is available via the [Town's Geographic Information System](#). You can access this information by selecting the Property Search option in the Public GIS (see the GIS [Help System](#) for guidance).

Please complete the following information prior to meeting with staff to help ensure that all of the necessary approvals for your project are identified early on:

Provide a brief explanation of the type of project you are considering:

The property address is _____ and the Parcel ID is _____

The property is located in the _____ Zoning District and is _____ sq. ft. in size

The use is listed under section _____ of the Zoning Bylaw
(This information is available in [Section 3.3](#) of the Zoning Bylaw)

Town Staff Consultation Checklist

It is suggested that while in the early stages of deciding upon what it is you would like to do, you contact the following departments for guidance. This checklist is the first step in the overall permitting process. Please note that speaking to an individual **does not** grant you approval for the project:

For Interior Projects:

- _____ [Inspection Services Department](#) (413) 259 – 3030 or e-mail inspections@amherstma.gov
- _____ [Planning Department](#) (413) 259-3040 or e-mail planning@amherstma.gov
- _____ [Health Department](#) (413) 259-3077 or e-mail health@amherstma.gov
- _____ [Fire Department](#) (413) 259-3082 or e-mail fire@amherstma.gov
- _____ [Select Board](#) (413) 259-3001 or e-mail selectboard@amherstma.gov

For Exterior Projects, please contact **all** of the above departments **in addition** to the following:

- _____ [Conservation Department](#) (413) 259-3045 or e-mail conservation@amherstma.gov
- _____ [Department of Public Works](#) (413) 259-3050 or e-mail publicworks@amherstma.gov
- _____ (For Tree Removal) [Tree Warden/Conservation Department](#) (413) 259-3045 or e-mail treewarden@amherstma.gov